

Listing of Claims:

The claims as submitted previously with the request for continued examination have not been amended. The claims are listed for the Examiner's convenience.

1-10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently Amended) A method for using a computer system, operating on a communications network comprising one or more central nodes communicably coupled to a plurality of user nodes corresponding to one or both of buyers and sellers, to facilitate a transaction between a seller and at least one buyer, the method performed by a computer system at a central node comprising:

[H]hosting an electronic marketplace having an operably coupled transaction processor for processing transactions between buyers and sellers;

[O]operating the electronic marketplace under a legal framework that imposes requirements on sellers of items, the legal framework including requirements that an item posted for sale is available for physical and legal ownership transfer to a buyer and that the seller is legally required to convey physical and legal ownership of the item if the buyer meets one or more seller-specified conditions of sale including a sale price;

receiving information from a seller corresponding to an item to be sold, the received information including a data record corresponding to the item to be sold, the data record including a description of the item to be sold, a sale price for the item, and a header including seller-specific identification information, the received data record representing a binding offer by the seller to sell the item;

verifying authenticity of the received data record based at least in part on the received seller-specific identification information;

if the received data record is successfully authenticated:

(i) outputting the binding offer to sell to a plurality of potential buyers;

(ii) receiving acceptance of said binding offer to sell said item from at least one buyer, said buyer tendering acceptance by providing payment information, said acceptance giving rise to a legal obligation by the seller to convey physical and legal ownership to said buyer;

(iii) temporarily locking the data record corresponding to the item;

(iv) processing the purchase transaction using the buyer's provided payment information and the transaction processor operably coupled to the electronic marketplace; and

(v) unlocking and updating the data record corresponding to the item to indicate ownership of the item by the buyer.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 further comprising:
detecting that a data record for the item is locked; and
rejecting another acceptance of the binding offer by a second buyer while processing acceptance from and payment by the first buyer is pending.

13. (Canceled)

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the received payment information comprises information identifying an account maintained by or on behalf of an entity operating the computer system.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the received payment information identifies a credit card account.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 further comprising:
notifying the seller of the acceptance of the binding offer to sell the item.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 further comprising:
withholding payment from the seller until delivery to the buyer is assured.

18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 further comprising:
processing the payment information to collect funds for the item;
deducting a predetermined commission for sale of the item; and
transferring a remainder of the funds to the seller as payment for the item.

19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 further comprising:
processing the payment information to collect funds in payment for the item;
depositing the funds into an escrow account; and
withholding payment of the funds in the escrow account to the seller until delivery to the
buyer is assured.

20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 further comprising:
requiring performance by the seller of terms and conditions associated with the binding
offer to sell before providing payment to the seller.

21-80. (Canceled)

81. (Previously Presented) A method for using a computer system, operating on a
communications network comprising one or more central nodes communicably coupled to a
plurality of user nodes corresponding to one or both of buyers and sellers, to facilitate a
transaction between a seller and at least one buyer, the method performed by a computer system
at a central node comprising:

hosting an electronic marketplace having an operably coupled transaction processor for
processing transactions between buyers and sellers;

operating the electronic marketplace under a legal framework that imposes requirements
on sellers of items, the legal framework including requirements that an item posted for sale is
available for physical and legal ownership transfer to a buyer and that the seller is legally
required to convey physical and legal ownership of the item if the buyer meets one or more
seller-specified conditions of sale including a sale price;

receiving information from a seller corresponding to an item to be sold, the received information including a data record corresponding to the item to be sold, the data record including a description of the item to be sold, a sale price for the item, and a header including seller-specific identification information, the received data record representing a binding offer by the seller to sell the item;

verifying authenticity of the received data record based at least in part on the received seller-specific identification information;

if the received data record is successfully authenticated:

(i) presenting to a plurality of potential buyers the seller's binding offer to sell the item, the presented binding offer to sell including at least a binding offer price;

(ii) receiving from at least one buyer a binding acceptance of the binding offer, the received binding acceptance including payment information sufficient to authorize payment of the offer price to a third-party, said acceptance giving rise to a legal obligation by the seller to convey physical and legal ownership to said buyer;

(iii) temporarily locking the data record corresponding to the item;

(iv) processing the purchase transaction using the received payment information and the transaction processor operably coupled to the electronic marketplace; and

(v) unlocking and updating the data record corresponding to the item to indicate ownership of the item by the buyer.

82. (Canceled)

83. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 81 wherein the payment information sufficient to enable payment to the third-party comprises at least an account identifier, the possession of which provides authorization to debit the identified account by a predetermined amount.

84. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 81 further comprising using the received payment information to enable a transaction fee to be paid to the third-party.

85. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 84 wherein the transaction fee is independent of the binding offer price.

86. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 84 wherein the transaction fee is related to the binding offer price.

87. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 86 wherein the transaction fee is a percentage of the binding offer price.

88. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 81 wherein the third-party is an entity by whom, or on whose behalf, the computer system at the central node is operated.

89. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 81 wherein the third-party is independent of the seller.

90. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 81 further comprising receiving, by the third party, payment from the buyer using the received payment information.

91. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 90 further comprising providing payment from the third-party to the seller.

92. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 81 further comprising charging the seller a transaction fee.

93. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 81 further comprising keeping the buyer's received payment information confidential from the seller.

94. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 81 further comprising selectively allowing the buyer to take delivery of the item or to post the item for re-sale.

95. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 94 wherein, if the buyer elects to post the item for re-sale, the third-party maintains possession of the item pending the re-sale.

96. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 94 wherein posting the item for re-sale comprises offering the item for auction.

97. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 94 wherein posting the item for re-sale comprises making another binding offer to sell the item.

98. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 81 further comprising allowing the buyer to post the item for re-sale or auction without taking delivery of the item.

99. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 98 further comprising receiving from the buyer a new offer price or a reserve price.

100. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 98 further comprising posting the item for re-sale or auction.

101-102. (Canceled)

103. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 81 further comprising, prior to presenting the binding offer to the plurality of potential buyers, receiving from the seller an identifier associated with the item for sale.

104. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 103 further comprising using the received identifier as an index into a database to retrieve a data record descriptive of the item.

105. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 104 wherein the data record was previously created based on a prior transaction.

106. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 103 wherein the database was developed in a first instance by an entity independent of the third-party.

107. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 103 wherein the database is maintained by the third-party based on transactions facilitated by the computer system.

108. (Previously Presented) A method for using a computer system, operating on a communications network comprising one or more central nodes communicably coupled to a plurality of user nodes corresponding to one or both of buyers and sellers, to facilitate a transaction between a seller and at least one buyer, the method performed by a computer system at a central node comprising:

- hosting an electronic marketplace having an operably coupled transaction processor for processing transactions between buyers and sellers;

- operating the electronic marketplace under a legal framework that imposes requirements on sellers of items, the legal framework including requirements that an item posted for sale is available for physical and legal ownership transfer to a buyer and that the seller is legally required to convey physical and legal ownership of the item if the buyer meets one or more seller-specified conditions of sale including a sale price;

- receiving information from a seller corresponding to an item to be sold, the received information including a data record corresponding to the item to be sold, the data record including a description of the item to be sold, a sale price for the item, and a header including seller-specific identification information, the received data record representing a binding offer by the seller to sell the item;

- verifying authenticity of the received data record based at least in part on the received seller-specific identification information;

if the received data record is successfully authenticated:

- (i) presenting to a plurality of potential buyers the seller's binding offer to sell the item, the presented binding offer to sell including at least a binding offer price;
- (ii) receiving from at least one buyer a binding acceptance of the binding offer, the received binding acceptance including payment information sufficient to authorize payment of the offer price to a third-party, said acceptance giving rise to a legal obligation by the seller to convey physical and legal ownership to said buyer;
- (iii) temporarily locking the data record corresponding to the item;
- (iv) processing the purchase transaction using the transaction processor operably coupled to the electronic marketplace, said processing including receiving payment for the item from the buyer by the third-party and making payment for the item from the third-party to the seller while maintaining the buyer's payment information in confidence from the seller; and
- (v) unlocking and updating the data record corresponding to the item to indicate ownership of the item by the buyer.

109. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 108 wherein the third-party comprises a trusted intermediary.

110. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 108 wherein the third-party is independent of the buyer and of the seller.

111. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 108 further comprising charging by the third-party a transaction fee for handling the sale of the item.

112. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 111 wherein the transaction fee is charged to the seller.

113. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 111 wherein the transaction fee is independent of the offer price.

114. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 111 wherein the transaction fee is related to the offer price.

115. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 114 wherein the transaction fee is a percentage of the sales price.

116. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 108 further comprising allowing the buyer to post the item for re-sale or auction without taking delivery of the item.

117. (Canceled)

118. (Previously Presented) A method for using a computer system, operating on a communications network comprising one or more central nodes communicably coupled to a plurality of user nodes corresponding to one or both of buyers and sellers, to facilitate a transaction between a seller and at least one buyer, the method performed by a computer system at a central node comprising:

hosting an electronic marketplace having an operably coupled transaction processor for processing transactions between buyers and sellers;

operating the electronic marketplace under a legal framework that imposes requirements on sellers of items, the legal framework including requirements that an item posted for sale is available for physical and legal ownership transfer to a buyer and that the seller is legally required to convey physical and legal ownership of the item if the buyer meets one or more seller-specified conditions of sale including a sale price;

receiving information from a seller corresponding to an item to be sold, the received information including a data record corresponding to the item to be sold, the data record including a description of the item to be sold, a sale price for the item, and a header including seller-specific identification information, the received data record representing a binding offer by the seller to sell the item;

verifying authenticity of the received data record based at least in part on the received seller-specific identification information;

if the received data record is successfully authenticated:

(i) presenting to a plurality of potential buyers the seller's binding offer to sell an item, the presented binding offer to sell including at least a binding offer price;

(ii) receiving from at least one buyer a binding acceptance of the binding offer, the received binding acceptance including payment information sufficient to authorize payment of the offer price to a third-party, said acceptance giving rise to a legal obligation by the seller to convey physical and legal ownership to said buyer;

(iii) temporarily locking the data record corresponding to the item;

(iv) processing the purchase transaction using the transaction processor operably coupled to the electronic marketplace

(v) unlocking and updating the data record corresponding to the item to indicate ownership of the item by the buyer; and

(vi) allowing the buyer to post the item for re-sale or auction without taking delivery of the item.

119. (Previously Presented) A method for using a computer system, operating on a communications network comprising one or more central nodes communicably coupled to a plurality of user nodes corresponding to one or both of buyers and sellers, to facilitate a transaction between a seller and at least one buyer, the method performed by a computer system at a central node comprising:

hosting an electronic marketplace having an operably coupled transaction processor for processing transactions between buyers and sellers;

operating the electronic marketplace under a legal framework that imposes requirements on sellers of items, the legal framework including requirements that an item posted for sale is available for physical and legal ownership transfer to a buyer and that the seller is legally required to convey physical and legal ownership of the item if the buyer meets one or more seller-specified conditions of sale including a sale price;

receiving information from a seller corresponding to an item to be sold, the received information including a data record corresponding to the item to be sold, the data record including a description of the item to be sold, a sale price for the item, and a header including seller-specific identification information, the received data record representing a binding offer by the seller to sell the item;

verifying authenticity of the received data record based at least in part on the received seller-specific identification information;

if the received data record is successfully authenticated:

(i) presenting to a plurality of potential buyers the seller's binding offer to sell the item, the presented binding offer to sell including at least a binding offer price;

(ii) receiving from at least one buyer a binding counteroffer for the item, the binding counteroffer including at least a binding counteroffer price for the item, the received binding counteroffer including payment information sufficient to authorize payment of the counteroffer price;

(iii) receiving from the seller an indication of acceptance or non-acceptance of the buyer's counteroffer, said acceptance giving rise to a legal obligation by the seller to convey physical and legal ownership to said buyer; and

(iv) if the seller accepts the buyer's counteroffer, then temporarily locking the data record corresponding to the item, processing the purchase transaction at the counteroffer price using the transaction processor operably coupled to the electronic marketplace, unlocking the data record corresponding to the item, and updating the data record to indicate ownership by the buyer.

120. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 119 wherein the binding counteroffer is subject to an expiration date.

121. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 120 wherein the buyer specifies the expiration date.

122. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 119 wherein the buyer's counteroffer is received by a third-party that notifies the seller of the counteroffer's existence.

123. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 119 wherein the seller may elect to accept or reject the binding counteroffer.

124. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 119 wherein the computer system at the central node is operated by or on behalf of a third-party that is independent of the seller and the buyer.

125. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 124 wherein the third-party comprises a trusted intermediary.

126. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 124 wherein the third-party maintains the buyer's payment information in confidence from the seller.

127. (Canceled)

128. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 119 wherein payment of the counteroffer price is made directly from the buyer to the seller.

129. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 119 wherein payment of the counteroffer price is made indirectly from the buyer to the seller through a third-party.

130. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 further comprising policing the electronic marketplace to selectively revoke access to the electronic marketplace by misbehaving users.

131. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 130 further comprising revoking access to the electronic marketplace by a seller that has failed to comply with one or more requirements of the legal framework under which the electronic marketplace is operated.

132. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 130 further comprising revoking access to the electronic marketplace by an accepting buyer that has failed to provide payment information sufficient to facilitate payment for purchase of the item.

133. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 81 further comprising policing the electronic marketplace to selectively revoke access to the electronic marketplace by misbehaving users.

134. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 further comprising revoking access to the electronic marketplace by a seller that has failed to comply with one or more requirements of the legal framework under which the electronic marketplace is operated.

135. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 further comprising revoking access to the electronic marketplace by an accepting buyer that has failed to provide payment information sufficient to facilitate payment for purchase of the item.

136. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 108 further comprising policing the electronic marketplace to selectively revoke access to the electronic marketplace by misbehaving users.

137. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 136 further comprising revoking access to the electronic marketplace by a seller that has failed to comply with one or more requirements of the legal framework under which the electronic marketplace is operated.

138. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 136 further comprising revoking access to the electronic marketplace by an accepting buyer that has failed to provide payment information sufficient to facilitate payment for purchase of the item.

139. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 118 further comprising policing the electronic marketplace to selectively revoke access to the electronic marketplace by misbehaving users.

140. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 139 further comprising revoking access to the electronic marketplace by a seller that has failed to comply with one or more requirements of the legal framework under which the electronic marketplace is operated.

141. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 139 further comprising revoking access to the electronic marketplace by an accepting buyer that has failed to provide payment information sufficient to facilitate payment for purchase of the item.

142. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 119 further comprising policing the electronic marketplace to selectively revoke access to the electronic marketplace by misbehaving users.

143. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 142 further comprising revoking access to the electronic marketplace by a seller that has failed to comply with one or more requirements of the legal framework under which the electronic marketplace is operated.

144. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 142 further comprising revoking access to the electronic marketplace by an accepting buyer that has failed to provide payment information sufficient to facilitate payment for purchase of the item.